

Report 2006-"Beyond Scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crises", released by the UNDP, India is placed at 126th position on Human Development Index (HDI) amongst 177 countries. The value of India's HDI has increased from 0.577 in 2000 to 0.611 in 2004 and India is placed in the 'Medium Human Development' category of countries. It is expected that with the high growth rates achieved in the last few years, value of India's HDI would improve further and there would be an improvement in the rank.

(b) The Planning Commission do not have information on number of crorepatis. However, as per the data available with the Income Tax Department, the number of income tax assesseees (individuals) with income of Rs. 10 lakh and above was 91,877 in 2004-05. As per the estimates of poverty made by the Planning Commission from the NSSO large sample survey consumer expenditure data of the 55th Round, 260.2 million people lived below the poverty line in 1999-2000. As per the Census of India, 2001, the number of people living in the slums was 42.58 million among the 640 cities and towns reporting slums. In order to address the issue of farmers suicide, rehabilitation package has been formulated for distressed farmers in 31 districts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra.

(c) From the NSSO large sample survey on consumer expenditure conducted in 2004-05 (NSS61st Round), the number of persons having consumption expenditure of Rs. 12 per day (or Rs. 360 per month) works out to 248.6 million, consisting of 226.4 million persons in the rural areas and 22.2 million persons in the urban areas.

Monitoring of service sector performance

357. SHRI DEVDAS APTE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to set up a high level group in the Planning Commission to monitor service sector performance;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government would also consider to set up another group which could monitor the slow growth of agriculture sector; and

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RAJYA SABHA

(d) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) and (b) The Planning Commission has initiated action for setting up a High Level Group to look into the various factors influencing the performance of the service sector and suggest policy measures which would need to be taken to sustain its competitiveness in the coming years. The High Level Group will function under the overall Guidance of Planning Commission and will include experts from the relevant areas.

(c) and (d) The National Farmer's Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. M.S. Swaminathan has already gone into the various issues related to the agricultural sector including its slow growth and has submitted its reports to the Government. The Planning Commission has also set up 12 Working Groups to make recommendations on various aspects of development of the agricultural and allied sectors in the Eleventh Plan. A Steering Group under the Chairmanship of Dr. OH. Hanumantha Rao would also, *inter alia*, go into the issue of slow agricultural growth. There is no proposal under consideration of Planning Commission at present for setting up yet another group to monitor the slow growth of the agricultural sector.

Investment in rural infrastructure

358. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any initiatives for the development of rural infrastructure by bringing huge investments in rural areas by 2010; and

(b) if so, the details thereof by indicating various schemes and policy made by the Planning Commission so far for the infrastructure development in rural areas by making it transparent and accountable in the country, particularly in Maharashtra State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has launched Bharat Nirman programme as a four-year plan to build infrastructure in rural areas with identified physical